

Council on Postsecondary Education  
Committee on Equal Opportunities  
April 15, 2002

Status of Teacher Education Program  
University of Louisville

The committee asked the staff of the University of Louisville to attend the April 15 meeting to discuss the status of the university's teacher education program. An article in the February 11, 2002, issue of the Courier Journal stated that the UofL education program is struggling to attract minorities to the teacher-training program.

According to the article, the university has not produced as many minority educators as it would like. UofL's teacher-training program has graduated 63 African American students (or 8.6 percent of 734 graduates) from its five-year program since 1997. The article also acknowledged that UofL hired its first minority recruitment coordinator to work with local schools to establish an Educator Career Academy magnet program at Louisville high schools.

The program has also been criticized for the financial and time constraints placed on minorities. African American students from differently advantaged backgrounds may be discouraged from enrolling in the program because they sacrifice the opportunity to earn a stable income.

The article indicated that UofL recognizes a need to address the underrepresentation of African Americans in the teacher-training program, but the institution fails to identify barriers that could increase the number of minority students in the education pipeline.

Staff preparation by Sherron Jackson

Courier Journal

February 11, 2002

## School learns hard lessons

### U of L education program struggles

### Five-year degree meant to boost teacher training proves tough draw

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By Mark Pitsch  
The Courier-Journal



**Kim Coslow, sitting on the floor, was among the students in a recent University of Louisville education class. Last year, 143 students received bachelor's degrees in education, while 485 received master's degrees. (photo/Durell Hall Jr.)**

School tries to attract more minorities to go into teachingIt began with a simple goal: to graduate better-trained teachers, even if it took five years instead of four.

But since switching to a five-year master's program in 1991, the University of Louisville has struggled to draw education students, and the passing rate of its students on a teacher competency test fell below the state average.

Now, although the longer master's program remains the primary effort, U of L has reinstated more traditional four-year bachelor's programs to train teachers for kindergarten through fifth grade and a joint elementary-special education program.

U of L also has introduced an alternative program for people in other careers who want to teach special education. This summer, it will offer a similar program for people who want to teach middle and secondary grades.

The moves came in response to the needs of schools in Jefferson County and nearby districts, which hire many teachers trained at U of L. Jefferson County officials asked the university to reintroduce the bachelor's degrees and offer the alternative ways to certify teachers.

"We saw the need and we see the need for the next few years" for more teachers, said Bill Eckels, human resources director for Jefferson County Public Schools. "The competition for available teachers is going to get worse, and we need some long-term solutions to the problem."

This week, state and national accrediting teams will be on campus to evaluate U of L's College of Education and Human Development, a review that occurs every five years. Accreditation is crucial for the college's reputation and ability to attract students and place them in good jobs.

Susan Leib, executive director of Kentucky's Education Professional Standards Board, said U of L's longer teacher training program "really seemed to be working" at the last accreditation review.

"The students seemed to be happy. They were doing a good job. I applaud their effort at quality. . . In an ideal world (the five-year program) would be the way to go," Leib said.

Her reviewers will join those from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education on U of L's campus through Wednesday to see whether the education college meets national and state standards for teacher preparation.

U of L officials say the fiveyear program that largely replaced the school's undergraduate education major does a better job preparing teachers for the classroom, combining an intensive one-year master's program in teaching with a bachelor's degree in another subject.

Still, officials acknowledge, the change has not been as popular with students as they hoped.

"If you're the only university in the state that's doing it and students have options, students use those options," said Douglas Simpson, dean of the education college.

Mark Condon, a U of L education professor, said of the switch to five years, "That's not where the market went."

The five-year program grew out of a national movement to improve the quality of teacher preparation.

"It was responding to a big feeling that teachers weren't being adequately prepared to teach. So in that sense it was successful," said Steve Ryan, a former U of L education professor who is now at Michigan State. "We got a lot of national attention for it. People seemed to respect what we did."

But since the longer program was adopted, the number of teachers produced by U of L -- generally in the mid-500s to low 600s in bachelor's and master's degrees a year through the 1990s -- hasn't kept pace with the increasing numbers at Bellarmine University and Indiana UniversitySoutheast, whose programs have seen 25 percent growth or higher.

"We literally have led to the creation of programs at Bellarmine and IU-Southeast, and they're doing what we used to be doing," said Blaine Hudson, U of L's Pan African Studies chairman who teaches courses in the university's education program.

Also, the college's pass rate on the basic competency test for teachers, the Praxis test, was 88 percent for U of L students in 1999-2000, compared with 94 percent statewide.

Linda Irwin-Devitis, an associate dean in U of L's education college, said the lower-than-average pass rate reflected, in part, the fact that some of the course work didn't match what was being asked on the exam, which typically tests educators' understanding of the subjects they'll teach.

She said a task force studied the problem, which led to changes in the program. When Praxis pass rates for 2000-01 are made public later this year, Irwin-Devitis said she expects improvement.

Teachers have been in strong demand in Kentucky in recent years. In 1996-97, 45,266 teachers were on the job, according to the state Education Department; this year that number climbed to

47,924. Jefferson County employed 6,192 teachers in 1996-97, according to the state data, and 6,368 this year.

Eckels, the Jefferson school system's human resources director, said it has hired 2,411 teachers in the last four years, an average of more than 600 each year.

Eckels said the U of L program "wasn't producing as many teachers as we had the needs for." But that began to change when Simpson became dean in 1999, Eckels said.

In 1990-91, before the five-year program started, U of L's education college awarded 291 bachelor's degrees. By 2000-01, the number had fallen to 143 -- all in sports science, physical education or health education. The number of U of L master's degrees awarded by the college increased from 271 to 485 in that period, but only 184 master's grads came through the five-year program last year. The rest were already teaching or in other career fields.

"Little 18 year olds who want to be teachers don't want to wait until they're 24," Condon said.

But Simpson, who is a candidate for dean of education at the University of Memphis, said degree numbers will increase soon. "We're actually growing our enrollment significantly at this present time," he said.

Jefferson County officials say they're pleased with the program's latest direction. "It took them awhile to do this, but they put in some changes that we asked for that will lead to more teachers," Eckels said.

U of L students in the five-year program said generally they're getting solid preparation to become teachers.

Amanda Baker, 24, of Louisville, had mixed feelings. "It's OK," she said. "I'm at the end of it. It's my last semester and it's a great price, but there are a lot of bugs they still need to work out."

Baker praised the university's faculty and said the training has made her ready to enter the classroom. But she said because U of L has no specialty in middle school education, she had to take both elementary education and secondary education courses.

Kim Coslow, 38, of Louisville, said she feels prepared to graduate in May.

"I cannot believe that any college graduate could be more prepared than I and my fellow (graduates) will be," she said. "We have spent numerous hours in the classroom at the varying grade levels, and have had ample opportunities to solo teach."

Maria Machin, 33, a business teacher at Fern Creek Traditional High School, said she enjoyed the program, in which she got a master's in education after quitting her marketing job.

"I was fortunate. I could quit my job and concentrate on my classes," she said. "I felt completely prepared to enter the classroom."

With a longer program at U of L, the more traditional bachelor's programs at nearby Bellarmine University and IU-Southeast grew.

At Bellarmine, undergraduate education enrollment in 1997 was 136; now it's 196. Its graduate enrollment rose from 73 in 1997 to 251 this year.

Maureen Norris, dean of the education school at Bellarmine, said she expects 40 bachelor's graduates and 120 master's graduates this year. She said the number of education master's graduates has about doubled in five years, and the number of bachelor's has increased by about 25 percent.

At IU-Southeast, the number of education bachelor's graduates increased from 103 in 1997 to 139 in 2001. The number of master's graduates rose from 109 to 148 over the same period.

Gloria Murphy, dean of the education school at IU-Southeast, said the increase can be attributed, in part, to U of L's longer program. She said 288 of the 1,055 students enrolled in the education program this year are from Kentucky. "In their mind, all they know is four years, we should have a degree," she said. "That could be one of the reasons why people cross the river. And we're close to home."